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More Grass - - Better Watersheds

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The Seeding-Plant Control Program Needed To Make National Forest Grasslands Fully Productive

One and a tenth million cattle and 3 million sheep graze on National Forest range. These livestock are grazed under permit by over 22,500 stockmen, mostly in the West. Forage for some 6 million cow-months and 8 million sheep-months comes from 62 million acres of the National Forest range.

In addition, these same ranges support a large part of this country's big-game and other wildlife populations. The big-game herds--mainly deer and elk--in the western National Forests comprise approximately 2,600,000 animals. Much of the range is in open commercial timber stands.

Besides making an important contribution to the Nation's meat supply, most National Forest ranges are important watershed lands. Industries, irrigation farmers, power companies, and hundreds of towns and cities depend upon the National Forests for their water supplies. National Forests supply a major portion of the water on which the whole economy of the western States depends. Some \$300,000,000 worth of water flows from the National Forests annually. Hydroelectric power generated from that water is worth over \$30,000,000 annually. Consequently, these multiple uses of the National Forests must be skillfully administered to achieve satisfactory watershed conditions, high-level forage and timber production, a favorable home for wildlife, and desirable recreation facilities.

Rehabilitation of Wornout Ranges--Urgently Needed

About 9 percent of the rangelands, principally in our western National Forests, need rehabilitation. These lands can and should be restored to full productivity so that they can make their maximum contribution to our national welfare and security. At present so little plant cover grows on many of these areas that it has practically no value in providing forage for sheep and cattle and is not effective in protecting the soil from erosion. Seeding, noxious plant control, or both are needed to restore them to productivity, because proper range management alone is too slow to do the job within a practical period of time.

The Anderson-Mansfield Act

In the Anderson-Mansfield Act (Public Law 348, 81st Congress) Congress recognized that restoration of rangelands is a national problem and authorized appropriations for the seeding of National Forest ranges on a planwise basis with the idea of completing it in a 15-year period. The Act authorized appropriations in amounts beginning with \$1,500,000 for the fiscal year 1951 and progressively increasing to \$3,000,000 in 1955. Thereafter the annual authorization is \$3,000,000 until the final year of the program, 1965. Since passage of the Act, Congress has recognized the needs and each year has appropriated substantial sums for range revegetation work.

What the Forest Service Has Done in Rehabilitation of Wornout Ranges

The Forest Service has successfully brought about rehabilitation of 600,000 acres of rangeland to date. The results demonstrate conclusively that such work is both practical and economical. Grazing capacity of many ranges has been increased many-fold by seeding and noxious plant control work. Approximately 6,000,000 acres is still in need of rehabilitation.

On the basis of research studies and plantings already completed, adaptable species of grasses are planted which will do best under the various soil and weather conditions encountered on the range areas. On some areas the work consists simply of the mechanical or chemical destruction of undesirable brush or low-value trees which have increased and compete seriously with choice forage plants. Where the remnant stand of perennial grasses is not enough to respond, such treatment is accompanied by seeding. Interest in wildlife values, and research are finding ways for making browse plantings specifically for wildlife use. Such work is carried on in cooperation with the State game departments. The Forest Service, in cooperation with other public land-administering agencies, has also developed special types of equipment particularly adapted for seeding and noxious plant control in the rough range country.

Public Benefits To Be Gained

By restoration of wornout ranges, grazing capacity is increased so that by good planning of grazing use livestock may continue to pasture areas of native range without damage to watershed and other values. Proper livestock numbers and good management are essential for keeping seeded areas, as well as native range, in a highly productive condition. Seeding, together with noxious plant control, will also establish a good plant cover that will stabilize the soil and check erosion. A large part of the range rehabilitation work is also beneficial to wildlife values. Furthermore, a well-protected watershed insures a more stable supply of clean, usable water, and helps to prevent floods.

Besides furnishing a good protective cover for important watershed lands, range rehabilitation work will enable National Forest ranges to contribute fully to our Nation's economy and security by providing supplies of wool, meat, and leather.

More grass, more meat, more money, and better watersheds result from good range management practices.

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